

# absolute india

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## KARNATAKA HC ON HIJAB ROW: NO RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS 'FOR NOW', REOPEN SCHOOLS

**“**We want to make an interim order on the matter of hijab row. Peace has to return to the state. Schools and colleges must open soon. This is not the final order. Until the final order is given, students must attend the schools in uniform without hijab or saffron shawls.**”**

Ritu Raj Awasthi, Chief Justice



**CLASSES 9, 10 TO OPEN MONDAY, DECISION ON SENIORS LATER**

**Bengaluru:** Schools can reopen for Classes 9 and 10 in Karnataka from Monday, the state government said today, three days after they were shut down amid a row over wearing hijab by students. Whether to allow pre-university, or PU, colleges for Classes 11 and 12 to reopen will be decided later. No decision has been taken yet for universities and higher education colleges. Students till Classes 8 were, however, allowed to attend school as the shutdown affected only higher classes. Chief Minister Basavaraj S Bommai had ordered all high schools and colleges to remain shut "to maintain peace and harmony" after separate groups of students marched to their colleges wearing saffron scarves and hijab.

**'PURDAH' PART OF INDIAN CULTURE: RSS**

**Ayodhya:** In a significant move, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has come out in support of the Karnataka student, Bibi Muskan Khan, who shot to prominence during hijab protests, and said that hijab or 'pardah' is also part of Indian culture. The RSS Muslim wing -- Muslim Rashtriya Manch -- has backed Bibi Muskan's plea to wear a hijab and condemned the saffron frenzy surrounding her. Talking to reporters, Anil Singh, Avadh prant sanchalak of Muslim Rashtriya Manch, said, "Hijab or pardah is also part of Indian culture and Hindu women too sport purdah as per choice. And the same condition applies to Bibi Muskan."

**'LET HC DECIDE FIRST': SC**

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Thursday refrained from giving a specific date for urgent listing of a plea seeking transfer of petitions to it from the Karnataka High Court, which is currently examining the permissibility of hijab in schools and colleges. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal mentioned the matter before a bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana. The Chief Justice told Sibal that the Karnataka High Court is already examining the issue and it should be allowed to decide it.

Centre removes 'at risk' nations category, no home quarantine required

**ACCORDING TO THE NEW GUIDELINES, IF TRAVELLERS, UNDER SELF-HEALTH MONITORING, DEVELOP SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS SUGGESTIVE OF COVID-19, THEY WILL IMMEDIATELY SELF-ISOLATE AND REPORT TO THEIR NEAREST HEALTH FACILITY OR CALL NATIONAL HELPLINE NUMBER (1075)/STATE HELPLINE NUMBER.**

**THE PASSENGERS, FOUND TO BE SYMPTOMATIC DURING SCREENING POST ARRIVAL, SHALL BE IMMEDIATELY ISOLATED AND TAKEN TO MEDICAL FACILITY, AS PER HEALTH PROTOCOL. IF TESTING POSITIVE, THEIR CONTACTS SHALL BE IDENTIFIED AND MANAGED AS PER LAID DOWN PROTOCOL, ACCORDING TO THE REVISED GUIDELINES.**



**INFECTION WITH ONE COVID VARIANT DOESN'T PROTECT FROM OTHERS: ICMR**

**New Delhi:** Infection by one variant does not provide protection from the other variants, Indian Council of Medical Research Director General Dr Balram Bhargava said on Thursday. NITI Aayog's Member, Health, Dr V.K. Paul, said: "It is a fact that the vaccine protection and natural immunity protection do not complete guarantee that one would not be re-infected again." He said that the issue is being constantly discussed across the world including India and this reality has to be accepted.

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**

The Union Health Ministry on Thursday revised the guidelines for international arrivals, recommending that all travellers self-monitor their health for next 14 days, instead of 7 days home quarantine as was mandated earlier.

The demarcation of 'at risk' and other countries has also been removed in the revised guidelines, which will come into effect from February 14. In a series of tweets, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that the need for undertaking RT-PCR test on 8th day and uploading the same on Air Suvudha portal is dispensed with.

Two per cent of international travellers from all countries will undergo random sampling on arrival. The travellers can leave the airport after submitting the sample.

## Lakhimpur Kheri incident: Minister's son gets bail

**Lucknow | Agencies**

Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister Ajay Mishra Teni, and the prime accused in the mowing down four farmers in Lakhimpur on October 3, following a protest by farmers, has been granted bail by the Allahabad High Court's Lucknow bench. The Allahabad High Court granted bail, pointing out the discrepancies in the case against him. The order has become controversial -- especially during the election season in the state, where the ruling BJP is seeking a second term in power. Mishra was arrested on October 9 last year by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that was probing the incident. His arrest came a day after the apex court expressed its dissatisfaction with the UP government over the action taken in the case. Eight people were killed on October 3, 2021. Four of the dead were farmers who were mowed down by a speeding SUV, belonging to



Ashish Mishra. One journalist covering the incident was also killed in the incident. The Special Investigation Team probing the Lakhimpur Kheri violence incident has said that there was a planned conspiracy to murder protesting farmers.

**"NO HOPE" OF JUSTICE: VICTIM'S FATHER**

**Sukhwinder Singh, father of 19-year-old Gurbinder Singh who was mowed down by Ashish Mishra's car on October 3 last year, said, "His getting bail so soon is not a good sign. We did not have any hopes earlier with this government. We don't have any hope now... Ajay Mishra Teni is still not removed."**

**SEAT-BELT MADE MANDATORY FOR REAR MIDDLE SEAT TOO**

**New Delhi:** The government has made it mandatory for automakers to provide three-point seat belts for all front-facing passengers in a car. The norm will also be applicable for the middle seat in the rear row of a car, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said at a press conference on Thursday.

"I have signed a file yesterday to make it mandatory for automakers to provide three-point seat belts for all the front facing passengers in a car," the road transport and highways minister said. He did not mention about the date from which the new requirement will come into force. Presently, only the front seats and two rear seats in most cars produced in the country have three-point seat belts.



**Thiruvananthapuram | Agencies**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan were trading barbs over social media over the situation in their states.

In a video released ahead of polling in Uttar Pradesh, where voting for the first phase was underway on Thursday, Adityanath said,

"Many good things have taken place in five years. (Vote correctly or) the work from all these five years will be ruined. Uttar Pradesh could become Kashmir, Kerala and Bengal. This is a time for big decisions."

Vijayan retorted on Twitter on Thursday. "If UP turns into Kerala as @myogiadityanath fears, it will enjoy the best education, health services, social welfare, living standards and have a harmonious society in which people

won't be murdered in the name of religion and caste. That's what the people of UP would want," he said.

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on Thursday hit out at Uttar Pradesh Chief. "Yogi Adityanath has less poverty, better human development indices, less crime & generally better standards of living than U.P. What we lack is good governance over the last 3-4 years but that is a temporary phenomenon," Abdullah tweeted.

## RAJ ASSEMBLY: FOUR BJP MLAS SUSPENDED FOR BUDGET SESSION

**Team Absolute | Jaipur**

The second day of the Rajasthan Assembly's budget session on Thursday witnessed huge uproar as BJP MLAs pressed their demand for the CBI probe into the REET paper leak 'scandal'. Meanwhile, four BJP MLAs were suspended for "preventing a legislator from speaking".

The Speaker adjourned the proceedings of the Assembly at 5 p.m. till Friday 11 a.m.

After the adjournment of the proceedings, the BJP MLAs sat on a dharna in the House itself and were seen arranging for mattress and blankets till the time of filing of the report.

Earlier in the day, four BJP MLAs were suspended for preventing CPI(M) MLA Balwan Poonia from speaking. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shanti Dhariwal proposed the suspension of all four in the House, which was later approved.

BJP MLAs Madan Dilawar, Ramlal Sharma, Avinash Gehlot, Chandrabhan Akya were suspended for the entire duration of the budget session. Proposing suspension, Shanti Dhariwal said that the MLAs stopped CPI(M) MLA Balwan Poonia from speaking on the Governor's address, snatched papers and abused, so all four should be suspended.

## RBI'S ACCOMMODATIVE STANCE SUPPORTS EQUITIES; SENSEX, NIFTY SETTLE HIGH

**Team Absolute | New Delhi**

India's key benchmark equity indices -- S&P BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty50 -- settled in the green on Thursday. The RBI keeping the repo rate unchanged in its latest monetary policy meeting and maintained an accommodative stance going ahead supported the broader market indices.

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) maintained the repo rate, or short-term lending rate, for commercial banks, at 4 per cent and stance accommodative to give a push to economic activity.

Thus, Sensex settled at 58,926 points, up 0.8 per cent or 460 points from the previous close. Nifty at 17,606 points, up 0.8 per cent or 142 points from the previous close.

Among the sectoral indices, bar-



ring Nifty PSU bank and auto, all other indices settled on a positive note. Nifty bank rose one per cent, financial services, 1.2 per cent, IT one per cent, media 1.7 per cent, metal 1.2 per cent, and realty 0.9 per cent, NSE data showed.

Among specific stocks, ONGC, Tata Steel, Infosys, SBI Life and HDFC Bank were the top five gainers, rising 3.6 per cent, 2.0 per cent, 2.0 per cent, 1.9 per cent, and 1.7 per cent, respectively.

**INDIA'S FY23 RETAIL INFLATION AT 4.5%**

India's FY23 retail inflation is projected at 4.5 per cent, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday. Besides, inflation projection for 2021-22 is retained at 5.3 per cent, with Q4FY22 at 5.7 per cent on account of unfavourable base effects that are expected to ease subsequently. In his policy statement post the Monetary Policy Committee's bi-monthly meeting, Das said: "The CPI reading for January 2022 is expected to move closer to the upper tolerance band, largely due to adverse base effects. Taking all these factors into consideration and on the assumption of a normal monsoon, CPI inflation for 2022-23 is projected at 4.5 per cent with Q1:2022-23 at 4.9 per cent; Q2 at 5.0 per cent; Q3 at 4.0 per cent; and Q4 at 4.2 per cent, with risks broadly balanced."

**INDIA'S FY23 GDP GROWTH PROJECTED AT 7.8%**

India's GDP is expected to grow at 7.8 per cent in FY2022-23, said RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday. In a statement after the Monetary Policy Committee's bi-monthly meet, Das said the real GDP growth is projected at 17.2 per cent in Q1FY23, at 7 per cent in Q2; at 4.3 per cent in Q3 and Q4 at 4.5 per cent. "In India, real GDP growth at 9.2 per cent for 2021-22 takes it modestly above the level of GDP in 2019-20. Private consumption, the mainstay of domestic demand, continues to trail its pre-pandemic level," he said. "The persistent increase in international commodity prices, surge in volatility of global financial markets and global supply bottlenecks can exacerbate risks to the outlook." According to Das, going forward, government's thrust on capital expenditure and exports are expected to enhance productive capacity and strengthen aggregate demand.





# UTTAR PRADESH RECORDS 59.87% TOTAL POLLING IN PHASE I

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Phase I of the polling for the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections on Thursday saw 59.87 per cent voting, according to the Election Commission of India.

"Phase I has seen 59.87 per cent polling till voting ended," said the ECI statement said.

The 11 districts that went to polls saw a mixed turnout with Agra witnessing 60.23 per cent voting, Aligarh 60.49 per cent, Bagpat 61.25 per cent, Bulandshahr 60.57 per cent, Gautam Budh Nagar 54.38 per cent, Ghaziabad 52.43 per cent, Hapur 60.53 per cent, Mathura 62.90 per cent, Meerut 60 per cent, Muzaffarnagar 65.32 per cent and Shami 66.14 saw per cent, the EC statistics showed. Of the total 403 seats in UP assembly, voting for 58 seats of the phase I of the seven phase elections is being held on Thursday. There are a total of 634 candidates in fray, 73 of them are women. As many as 2.28 crore voters (1.04 of them female) will exercise their franchise at 26,027 polling



booths across 10,853 polling stations in 11 districts.

## BJP, SP help desks just a 'hand' away in Noida

Noida: Not a usual sight it was on Thursday when all the major rival parties of the state just sat feet away to help the voters in distress. The workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP), Congress (INC) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) had set up help desks everywhere in the city near the polling stations to assist the residents if they face any problem. Though BJP had more help desks out there, yet, at one place in Sector 20, Noida, all the rival parties were sitting just next to each other. Speaking to one of the Samajwadi Party workers there, he alluded confidence in his candidate's victory. When asked about the purpose of setting up a help desk, the worker said, "We are here just to help people and bridge the gap between them [voters] and us." A BJP worker who was present on a help desk near Noida Inter college told reporter that the help desks have been set up in a bid to guide the first time voters or the people who are not aware of the voting process.

## BJP hits out at Jayant Chaudhary for not voting

New Delhi: Hitting out at Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) chief Jayant Chaudhary for not casting his vote on Thursday, the BJP asked if he has already abandoned the idea of winning. Taking to twitter, BJP Information and Technology Department national in-charge Amit Malviya said: "How responsible is it for Jayant Chaudhary to not go out and vote because he has an election rally? What message is he sending? Has he already abandoned the idea of winning? Why should people come out and even consider the RLD when he isn't serious about casting his vote?"

## Come out and vote for freedom from fear: Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi:

As Uttar Pradesh is voting for the first phase on 58 seats on Thursday, the leaders are appealing to people to come out and vote.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also made an appeal to the voters. He tweeted in Hindi, saying: "Come out and vote, get country freedom from all fear".

The voting is underway in the western UP where BJP has high stakes.

Voting began at 7 a.m. in the 58 Assembly constituencies in the first of the seven-phase elections, covering 11 districts of western Uttar Pradesh.



## 'CONGRESS MUKT BHARAT' PHRASE WAS SPONTANEOUSLY COINED IN GOA: NARENDRA MODI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday revealed the origins of the phrase 'Congress mukt Bharat' (Congress-free India) during his election speech at Mapusa town in North Goa.

PANAJI | Agencies

Modi, who was in Goa to campaign for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said that Goa had proved to be fortunate for his political journey, but added that the first time that he had used the phrase 'Congress mukt Bharat' was also in Goa, ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

"I have been limitlessly blessed by God Bodeshwar (Mapusa's local deity), that in the important moments of my life, Goa has played a decisive role. The journey of this role I am in right now began from Goa. In June 2013, there was a BJP (national) executive meeting here. When I was in Goa in June 2013, the BJP had nominated me as the election campaign committee head for the Lok Sabha election," Modi said in his speech.

"After that I was nominated as (BJP's) Prime Ministerial candidate. It was



an inspiration which emanated from this land of Goa. (Former Defence Minister late Manohar) Parrikar had organised my meeting here. In that meeting, I uttered this phrase spontaneously. The phrase was Congress mukt Bharat. This word emerged from the soil of Goa, a land which has been blessed by saints. It just came out of my mouth like that. This phrase has now become a resolve amongst crores of people of India," Modi said.

## Straight from wedding hall, just married couple casts vote

AGRA | Agencies

Setting an example for others, a just married couple reached polling station at Jaipur house here straight from the wedding hall to exercise their right to vote, driving home the message of the significance of voting.

After casting their votes, Agra resident Divyanshi Jain and her husband Aman Jain said: "It is important to vote and elect a good government for the country. Our area should also get developed. That's why we thought of casting our vote. We know which candidate is good for us." Twenty-one-year-old Aman said: "Many families



do not cast votes. It is every-one's fundamental right which they must exercise." Nine Assembly constituencies of Agra district has 3,477,645 electorates, of which 1,588,912 are women, 1,888,588 men, 41,270 youths and 145 transgenders. A total of 1,761 polling centres have been set up in

the district for 3,911 booths. Actually, Agra district has been divided into 62 zones for 390 sectors. Twenty five Sakhi booths have been made in the district. The women electorates will cast votes in the said booths, manned by the fairer sex. There are 886 critical booths in the district and over 17,000 polling personnel have been deployed to conduct the exercise. To conduct the polls in a free and fair manner, over 30,000 paramilitary force and police personnel have been deployed. A total of 1,956 polling stations will have webcasting facility while CCTV and videography teams are there at other places.

## GURUGRAM: 2 KILLED AS ROOF OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDING COLLAPSES

Gurugram: Two persons were killed and at least 6 others injured here on Thursday after a portion of an under-construction roof on the sixth floor of a residential building collapsed, officials said.

An official said that an under-construction roof on the sixth floor at Chintels Paradiso in Sector 109 collapsed, and the impact was so severe that it went on to damage all the roofs till the first floor, causing casualties.

Commissioner of Gurugram police, fire officials and teams of civil defence, SDRF and NDRF have arrived on the spot. Several people are said to be trapped in the debris. The rescue teams have started clearing the debris to rescue them. "The number of people trapped in the building's debris is yet to be ascertained but we suspect that around 5-6 could be trapped," Gulshan Kalra, Deputy Director Fire Department, told reporter.

Chintels Paradiso has a total of 530 flats and over 400 families reside there. The Fire Brigade, ambulances and police personnel were present on the spot.

## Another poster girl of Cong joins BJP

LONDON | Agencies

In yet another setback to the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, its poster girl for the 'Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon' campaign, Vandana Singh, has joined the BJP.

Vandana said that she left Congress due to 'negligible involvement of the high command' in matters important to the upcoming polls. "The party is giving opportunities to only those who have recently joined. I have worked for the Congress for six years. I was the vice president of the women's wing. But we do not get a chance to talk to Priyanka Gandhi. We cannot speak for ourselves in the party," said Vandana. Another poster girls of Congress's campaign, Priyanka Maurya, had earlier



joined the BJP. Priyanka Maurya had alleged that the Congress's distribution of tickets ahead of the Assembly election was rigged. "They (Congress) used my face, my name and my 10 lakh social media followers for the campaign. But when it came to the ticket for the upcoming

election, it was given to someone else. This is injustice. It is all pre-decided," Priyanka Maurya had stated. She had also alleged that she did not get the ticket "because I am an OBC girl and could not bribe Priyanka Gandhi's secretary Sandeep Singh."

## WWE wrestler 'The Great Khali' joins BJP



Team Absolute | New Delhi

Wrestler Dalip Singh Rana, 'the Great Khali', on Thursday joined BJP. Khali has joined the BJP in presence of Union Minister Jitendra Singh and party national general secretary Arun Singh and Member of Parliament Sunita Duggal at party national headquarters.

Welcoming the WWE wrestler, Jitendra Singh said

that like his strong physique and thoughts, Khali will work towards strengthening the party. "The Great Khali will remain a source of inspiration for the youth in the country. I am thankful to him for joining Prime Minister Narendra Modi's journey to take the country forward. People from all sections of the society are joining the BJP," the Union Minister said.

## 'Is nation or religion paramount': Madras HC expresses shock over dress code row

► THE MADRAS HIGH COURT ON THURSDAY EXPRESSED SHOCK OVER THE DRESS CODE CONTROVERSY ERUPTING IN CERTAIN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

CHENNAI | Agencies

A bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Munishwar Nath Bhandari asked: "What is paramount? Is it the country or religion?"

"I mean it is really shocking. Somebody is going for the hijab, somebody is going for the topi, and somebody is going for other things."

Questioning the intention behind such things, he asked: "Is it one country or divided by religion or by something like that. This is quite surprising."

Pointing out the fact that India was a secular country, he said: "What is found from the current affairs is nothing but an effort to divide the country by religion."

The Acting Chief Justice's observations came while hearing a batch of petitions filed



by Srirangam-based activist, Rangarajan Narasimhan who wanted the court to implement a strict dress code for devotees, disallowing non-Hindus from stepping into the temples across Tamil Nadu.

The bench asked the petitioner for an illustration to show the custom of dress code followed in practice as it made it clear that the custom is for individual temples.

He asked the petitioner how the question of putting up display boards arises if there was no uniform dress code. When the petitioner sought an order, the bench asked him to show what part of the 'Agamas' refer to trousers and shirts.

The bench also warned that he could be barred from appearing in person before the court and directed him to use appropriate words and stay away from quarrelling.

Advocate General R. Shanmugasundaram informed the court that each and every temple was following its own custom and visitors belonging to other religions are allowed only up to the 'akodi maram' (flag pole).

The bench finally allowed the petitioner to file an affidavit with illustrations on flouting of the dress code in temples.

## Telangana woman murdered on suspicion of performing black magic

HYDERABAD | Agencies

Suspicion of performing black magic claimed life of a woman in Telangana, police said.

The incident occurred in Kutoda village of Asifabad rural mandal in Kumaram Bheem Asifabad district on Wednesday.

According to police, a man, whose 12-year-old son had died a few days ago because of ill-health, attacked the woman and killed her as he suspected that the black magic performed by her led to the death of his son.

Kante Bheembai (65) died when Atram Katti hit her on her head with a stick when she was sitting near a bonfire to beat the winter chill. The woman's family members shifted her to Asifabad hospital but she succumbed on the way.

A police officer said that on the complaint lodged by Bheembai's son, the accused was arrested and sent to judi-



cial custody. Katti's son Shyam Rao (12) had died of ill-health a few days ago and he had suspicion that the sorcery being allegedly practiced by the woman which led to his death and he was waiting to take revenge.

The incident occurred one-and-half months after three men were hacked to death on suspicion of practicing black

magic. A man and his two sons were brutally hacked to death by a group of people during a meeting of Yerukala community at Tarakram Nagar in Jagtial district on December 20. During a heated argument, some participants in the meeting attacked Nageshwar Rao and his three sons with knives and other sharp-edged weapons and killed them in presence of 40-50 people. A woman in Yerukala Wada died a week ago and Rao's rivals suspected him to be responsible for her death. Superstitious beliefs are deep-rooted in parts of Telangana. The region has seen a spate of incidents in the past in which people suspected to be practicing 'Bhanamati' (a form of black magic) were burnt alive or hacked to death. In most of the cases, the victims were women. They were either murdered, paraded naked or physically abused.

The awareness campaign conducted by police over the last two decades led to a drop in the number of such cases but has not totally eliminated the menace.

## ED attaches Rs 1.77cr of Rana Ayyub in money laundering case

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has attached Rs 1.77 crore of journalist Rana Ayyub in connection with a money laundering case lodged against her for allegedly misusing funds collected in the name of help and charity through a website -- ketto.com.

An ED official said Ayyub had allegedly misused the funds, and diverted them into other account for personal expenses. ED sources said she cheated donors in a pre-planned manner. She had

opened a Fixed Deposit (FD) of Rs 50 Lakh, the money was collected through campaign, and diverted into FD from the savings account through net banking. On August 28, 2021, a complaint has been lodged with the Ghaziabad Police against Ayyub, alleging that "she cheated the general public in the name of charity". She was booked under sections 403, 406, 418, 420 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), read with section 66D of Information Technology Act. The funds were collected in the saving accounts of Rana Ayyub, her sister and her father.



## SC REINSTATES WOMAN JUDICIAL OFFICER, WHO QUIT CITING SEXUAL HARASSMENT CHARGES AGAINST HC JUDGE

► THE SUPREME COURT ON THURSDAY ORDERED THE REINSTATEMENT OF A FORMER WOMAN JUDICIAL OFFICER, WHO QUIT IN 2014 ALLEGING SEXUAL HARASSMENT BY A HIGH COURT JUDGE IN MADHYA PRADESH.

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the reinstatement of a former woman judicial officer, who quit in 2014 alleging sexual harassment by a high court judge in Madhya Pradesh.

A bench comprising Justices L. Nageswara Rao and BR Gavai said the resignation of the woman judicial officer cannot be held to be voluntary. The top court clarified that she will not be entitled to back wages, but she can continue in service. Justice Gavai, who pronounced the judgment on behalf of the bench, said the decision to accept the resignation of the officer was quashed



and set aside.

Earlier, the top court suggested to the Madhya Pradesh High Court to consider reinstating the judicial officer. However, the Full Court of the high court took a decision that her request cannot be accepted. The woman judicial officer had moved the Supreme Court seeking reinstatement. The petitioner alleged that hostile transfer orders were passed as she did not act as per the demands of

the supervising high court judge. In her complaint, she said that she transferred to a lower category city and also a Maoist affected area, which violated the transfer policy of the high court.

She added that transfer also prevented her from being with her daughter who was then appearing for the board exams, therefore she had to resign. The detailed judgment in the matter will be available later in the day.

## MAN MINES 4.57 CARAT DIAMOND WORTH RS 10 LAKH

**Panna:** The stone will be auctioned on February 24 and the proceeds will be given to the miner after deducting 11.5 per cent royalty, diamond inspector Anupam Singh said.

A man found 4.57 carat diamond, with an estimated value of Rs 10 lakh in a shallow mine of world-famous Panna mines in Madhya Pradesh, an official said on Thursday. Rana Pratap Singh, who hails from neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, found the stone in Bharkha area earlier this week, he said. Singh had taken a shallow mine on lease to mine diamonds in Bharkha area and fate smiled on him when he found a precious stone weighing 4.57 carat, the official said. As per private estimates, the diamond is likely to fetch around Rs 10 lakh.

## Light to moderate rain in eastern parts of Madhya Pradesh

Light to moderate showers were recorded in eastern parts of Madhya Pradesh in the past 24 hours with Mandla recording the highest 20 mm rainfall, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Light to moderate showers were recorded in eastern parts of Madhya Pradesh in the past 24 hours with Mandla recording the highest 20 mm rainfall, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday.

Chhindwara recorded 14 mm rainfall, Malkhanj 5.6 mm, Umair 3.8 mm, Jabalpur 2.4 mm and Sidhi 1.2 mm, according to IMD office, Bhopal.

The minimum temperature in the last 24 hours in Bhopal was recorded at 12.2 degrees Celsius while the lowest minimum (average) temperature was 10 degrees in Ratlam, Guna, and Gwalior. Hill station Pachmarhi recorded a mini-



mum temperature at 9.5 degree Celsius.

Due to a fresh western disturbance two days ago, the IMD had predicted light to moderate rain or drizzle in the eastern and western parts of Madhya Pradesh.

The IMD has also predicted rain these parts as the weather scientists have indicated another round of western disturbances by Friday.

"Some areas in east and west Madhya Pradesh may see light rain within a week

again with dry wind, but it would not have much impact on temperature. After next couple days, the temperature will gradually start reaching its normal position," said G.D. Mishra, a senior meteorologist in Bhopal.

Earlier, due to back-to-back western disturbances in the first week of January, many parts of the state had witnessed the heaviest spells of rain along with hail.

## 'Burkha' clad women rides bikes Institutional Development Plan is the vision document of education: Jain

■ In the viral video, four women wearing burkha were spotted riding bullet and sports bikes on the street. A woman sitting behind on the sports bike also gave a flying kiss. Another woman was showing victory signs in the viral video. The video of the incident is said to be recorded on the VIP road of Bhopal.

Team Absolute | Bhopal

A video of a group of Muslim woman riding two wheelers while wearing Burkha has gone viral on social media in state capital Bhopal.

The video of the incident is said to be recorded on the VIP road of Bhopal.

According to reports, The women have shared the video on Instagram with the name of 'Khan Sisters.'

In the viral video, four women wearing burkha were spotted riding bullet and sports bikes on the street. A woman sitting behind on the sports bike also gave a flying kiss.



Another woman was showing victory signs in the viral video. Notably, the bullet which the woman was riding had a BJP flag on the front number plate. As soon as the video went viral the matter intensified once again on Hijab and Burkha in the corridors of power. The congress had targeted the state government and at the same time, the BJP leader had demanded action against the incident.

Secretary, University Grants Commission, Rajneesh Jain has said that Institutional Development Plan (IDP) is very important and necessary for academic quality and excellence. IDP is the vision document of education. Jain was addressing a one-day workshop on Institutional Development Plan for Higher Education Institutions organized at Madhya Pradesh Private University Regulatory Commission in Bhopal on Thursday. The workshop was organized under the joint aegis of Madhya Pradesh Private University Regulatory Commission and Vidya Bharati Institute of Higher Education.

Jain said that the implementation of National Education Policy will bring revolutionary change in the field of education. He informed that the University Grants Commission has prepared the framework of Institutional Development Plan (IDP). With this, educational institutions can

## One day workshop concludes

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improve their goals and infrastructure. The IDP will also help in increasing the Gross Enrolment Rate of Higher Education. The basic objective of the Institutional Development Plan is to make students a successful citizen by improving the quality and infrastructure of educational institutions. In the National Education Policy, it will be mandatory for every educational institution to prepare an institutional development plan.

Former Vice Chancellor of

Kurukshetra University and National President of Vidya Bharati Institute of Higher Education Prof. Kailash Chandra Sharma said that for the first time such a workshop is being organized in the country on Institutional Development Plan for higher education institutions. He said that it is the responsibility of every university to prepare standards of university level from academic point of view. Every organization should be aware of its weaknesses and strengths. The Vice

Chancellors of Universities and Principals of Colleges should prepare a time bound strategy. It is very essential to know the vision of your university and college. Set a timeline for your institution. Curriculum should be changed at regular intervals and those subjects should be included which are useful for the students. Take your own initiative for experimental training. All institutions should promote green campus.

Chairman of Madhya Pradesh Private University Regulatory Commission Prof. Bharat Sharan Singh said that if the higher educational institutions update the check list under a proper system, then naturally the institutional development plan will be successful.

In the workshop, Prof. Ravindra Kanhare, President of Admission and Fee Regulatory Committee, Convener of Vidya Bharati Institute of Higher Education, Shashiranjana Akela, Vice Chancellors of various universities and principals of colleges were present.

## Khajuraho Dance Festival with Feb 20

► IT IS BEING ORGANISED IN ASSOCIATION WITH MADHYA PRADESH TOURISM IN THE KHAJURAO TEMPLES.

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Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Evam Kala Akademi is going to organise the 48th Khajuraho Dance Festival from February 20 to 26.

It is being organised in association with Madhya Pradesh Tourism in the Khajuraho Temples.

The seven-day international dance festival will begin with a kathak performance by disciples of Pandit Birju Maharaj from New Delhi. It will be followed by the performance of Bharatnatyam

dancer Shanta VP Dhananjayan and her troupe from Bangalore on the same day.

The performance of Odissi dancer Sujata Mohapatra, Bharatanatyam-Kathak dancer Nirupama Rajendra from Bangalore and Kuchipudi dancer Jai Ramarao and his troupe from New Delhi will be held February 21. Mohiniattam by Neena Prasad (Trivandrum), Bharatnatyam by Pasharnath Upadhayay (Bangalore), Kathak by Teena Tambe from (Mumbai), Kathak by Sonia Parchure (Mumbai), Kathakali-Bharatanatyam by Kalamandlam Sunil and Paris Laxmi (Kottayam, Kerala), Kathak -Udarta Netuma by Ragini Nagar (New Delhi) and Danuka Aaryavansa (Sri Lanka) will be showcased on February 22 and 23. On February 24 and 25, Kuchipudi by Basant Kiran and troupe (Kadri, Andhra

Pradesh), Kathak by Shavanri Jamenis and troupe (Pune), Bharatnatyam by Sandhya Purecha and her troupe (Mumbai), Kathak by Devika Devendra S Manglamukhi (Jaipur), Odissi group dance by Rudraksh Foundation (Bhuvneshwar) and Kathak by Nainika Ghosh and troupe (New Delhi) will be presented.

The fest will be concluded with Bharatnatyam-Kathak by Shweta Devendra and Kshama Malviya (Bhopal), Manipuri dance by Tapasya and troupe (Imphal) and her Kathak by Shama Bhathe and her troupe (Pune) will be held on February 26. Besides dance performances, exhibitions, Art-Mart, Kalavarta, Hunar, Chalchitra and Alankaran Samaroh will be conducted under the fest. Some tourism activities like, heritage run, glamping village tour, e-bike tour, water rafting and Bundeli food festival will also be organised.

## MAN HELD FOR SEXUALLY ASSAULTING 3-YEAR-OLD GIRL

**Bhopal:** A woman spotted the man sexually abusing the child who was screaming, and raised an alarm, following which another woman passing by stopped and alerted the police, he said.

A man was arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a three-year-old girl in the state capital, police said on Thursday.

Two women spotted the 59-year-old accused molesting the girl at a deserted kiosk in Ashoka Garden area on Wednesday and informed the police, inspector Alok Shrivastava of Ashoka Garden police said. A woman spotted the man sexually abusing the child who was screaming, and raised an alarm, following which another woman passing by stopped and alerted the police, he said.

The women, Gayatri Bhaskar and Vijaya Patil, were felicitated by the police for their prompt action, he said. The accused, who lived in the neighbourhood, had lured the girl promising to give her candy and took her to a deserted place, the official said, adding that the man had indulged in similar acts twice in the past.

A case under relevant provisions to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act has been registered against the accused.

## Chief Minister Planted Saptaparni and Moulshree Saplings

■ Sunil Bhatt Who Gave the Message of Environmental Protection through Matchboxes Also Planted Saplings

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Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted Saptaparni and

Moulshree saplings in Smart Garden on Thursday. Three-time Limca Book Record Holder matchbox man Shri Sunil Bhatt, who gave the message of environmental protection and cleanliness through match boxes, also planted saplings on the occasion.

Sunil Bhatt of Aga Club, along with Vimal Sahu and Manoj Buddhi Raja, was also present on the occasion. Bhatt has a collection of more than 250 types of matchboxes including those



on the subject of cleanliness and environment. He has organised 105 exhibitions so far to create awareness about cleanliness and environment through the exhibition of these match boxes. Bhatt working as Sub Additional Engineer in BHEL is popularly known as 'Match Box Man.' His work has also been appreciated in the TV programme "Kaun Banega Crorepati" in the year 2018. Aga Club is conducting plastic and polythene free campaign including planta-

tion as well as cleanliness in BHEL area. Aga club is active in the field of sports, health, safety and de-addiction apart from conducting activities for senior citizens.

Moulshree is also called Kesav in Sanskrit, Molsari or Bakool in Hindi. It is a tree of medicinal importance, which has been used in Ayurveda for centuries. Saptaparni plant is an evergreen medicinal tree, which has great importance in Ayurveda. This plant is used in the manufacture of various medicines.

## GOVERNMENT LAND WORTH 20 CRORES FREED

**Jabalpur:** The action was taken under the leadership of Jabalpur collector Illaiyaraja T and Superintendent of Police (SP) Siddhartha Bahuguna in Kudwari locality under Adhartal police station.

The district administration's campaign against encroachers and the land mafia continues in the district with 5 acre of government land in the district freed from the possession of encroachers. The estimated value of the land is worth around Rs 20 crore. The action was taken under the leadership of Jabalpur collector Illaiyaraja T and Superintendent of Police (SP) Siddhartha Bahuguna in Kudwari locality under Adhartal police station.

According to reports, the government land was occupied by Hafiz Moinuddin, Premalata Srivastava, Mamta Rakwar and Jittu Yadav. They started plotting on the land and three warehouses were also built on the land.

## Ramanujacharya made bridges of equality by eliminating class-discrimination: Chief Minister Shivraj Singh

- Ramanujacharya was the crown jewel of Indian saint tradition
- His entire philosophy is based on a strong foundation of equality and fraternity
- Chief Minister Chouhan visited "Statue of Equality"
- Distinguished people at the Millennium Celebrations in Hyderabad
- Statue of Oneness is about to be built in Omkareshwar, I seek blessings from all you saints: CM
- Madhya Pradesh "Statue of Oneness" will create a new identity

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan participated in Ramanuja Millennium Celebrations in Hyderabad on Wednesday. He visited the statue of Ramanujacharya at Sriramanagar, Jeeva Campus and also offered prayers. Chouhan was accompanied by his wife Sadhna Singh. The installation work of this 216 ft (66 m) high statue in Hyderabad, Telangana started in the year 2014. This Ramanuja statue has been named 'Statue of Equality'. This idol of Vaishnava saint Bhagvat Ramanuja, who lived about a thousand years ago in the 11th century, is located in the Chinna Jiyar Trust. Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the statue last week. This distinctive statue made of Panchadhatu has been named 'Statue of Equality'. Chouhan also informed the saints about the 'Statue of Oneness' to be built in Madhya Pradesh. Mohan Bhagwat also addressed the function. On this occasion, Chief Minister



Chouhan, while remembering the Vedic philosopher, social reformer Ramanujacharya, said that Ramanujacharya, who was born in Sri Perumbudur, Tamil Nadu, revived the Bhakti movement. Other Bhakti ideologies also arose from his teachings. Saints, poets like Anna Acharya, Bhakt Ramdas, Kabir, Mirabai also got inspiration. A thousand years later, his messages are relevant even today. His entire philosophy is a vast world in itself which is founded on a strong foundation of unity, equality and fraternity. He made a strong request to end the class-discrimination in the society and make bridges of equality. He was not just a religious preacher or a saint, but he was Sheshavartar himself, who exposed the eternal values of the Indian tradition through his teachings and actions. Keeping the Vedic Advaita principle intact by connecting different Indian cultures, his devotional spirit spread not only in South but also in North India. In this way he became the crown jewel of the Indian saint tradition. The Madhya Pradesh government has approved the works of construction of a 108 feet high multi-metal statue of Shankaracharya, Shankar Sangrahalaya and Acharya Shankar International Advaita Vedanta Sansthan in Omkareshwar, Madhya Pradesh. Last month, under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Shri Chouhan, prominent sages of the country had also come to Bhopal in the meeting of the Board of Trustees of Acharya Shankar Cultural Unity Trust, then there was a detailed discussion about the project started in Omkareshwar.

## STATE GOVT PLANS TO SET UP 10 NEW MEDICAL COLLEGES

**Indore:** With a view to ensuring an adequate number of doctors in Madhya Pradesh, the state government is working on a scheme to open 10 new medical colleges, a minister said on Wednesday.

"We are planning to open 10 new medical colleges in the state. We are also mulling opening medical colleges through public-private partnership (PPP) PPP mode," Medical Education Minister Vishvas Sarang, who arrived here to review his department's work, told reporters.

The state will get five imported genome sequencing machines from the Centre, while the Madhya Pradesh government will purchase four such machines on its own, he said, adding that these machines will be put to use in different medical colleges in the state. The state government will soon start 'Marej Mitra Yojana' in the state, under which interested persons can work in hospitals as volunteers to serve the needy patients and help them in all possible manners, he said.



EDITOR'S SPECS

Why Jat votes are important for Akhilesh?

The Jat and farmers votes in western Uttar Pradesh, a part of which is polling on Thursday, are extremely crucial for Akhilesh Yadav, who is making a concerted attempt to return to power in these elections. Though jats have a population of over 2 per cent only, the community not only dominates the politics of western UP but also prevails over the farmers of other communities. The BJP has been enlisting the support of Jats since 2014. The 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots had driven a deep wedge between the Jats and Muslims in the region and the BJP benefited the most due to communal polarisation. With the change in scenario, Akhilesh is now looking to make maximum gains - which will lead to maximum losses for BJP - in this region. He has teamed up with the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), which has also been working overtime to re-establish connect with farmers. The Samajwadi Party and RLD have been repeatedly reminding Jats of the agricultural distress to make them switch their vote. The tacit support of farmer leaders like Rakesh Tikait who have appealed to their community to 'defeat and punish BJP', is also helping the SP-RLD alliance. Akhilesh, in his speeches, has been promising sops to farmers - from higher MSP to free power to compensation for farmers who died during the agitation and also a memorial for them. Akhilesh knows that this phase of elections where Jats dominate is crucial because success here will give him a much-needed push in the race to reach the majority mark in the state assembly.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR INVASIVE SPECIES COULD SAVE TRILLIONS

A new research has found that the damage costs by invasive species are at least 10 times the management expenditure and that their prevention could save trillions. The research shows that since 1960, the global management of invasive species has cost at least 74 billion pounds (\$95 billion, in 2017 values) worldwide. In comparison, damage costs were calculated to be at least 878 billion pounds (\$1,131 billion) over the same 60-year period. This has caused huge losses to both agriculture and forestry sectors through production declines, infrastructural damages, as well as damage to healthcare systems through the spreading of diseases. Human activities cause the spread of invasive species. Humans may deliberately move animals and plants around for several reasons, including hunting, to keep as pets and horticultural specimens, or for pest control. It can also be unintentional, for example, when species wash up on shores on human-made objects or through cargo and other transport. Invasive species are a significant threat to biodiversity and have a harmful effect on ecosystems, including changing habitats and starving native animals of food and resources. Until very recently, there has been limited research into the economic impacts of invasive species. The study, published in Science of the Total Environment, highlights the huge economic burden of invasive species. Compared to 878 billion pounds in damage costs, only 74 billion pounds was



spent on managing invasive species, of which merely 2.1 billion pound was spent proactively on prevention measures. The vast majority of the management bill, 56 billion pounds (\$73 billion), was spent on control or eradication measures, which are often only conducted once invasive species have become well established. The research also estimated that the average management delay observed across all species (11 years) resulted in the payment of over a trillion extra costs compared to a situa-

tion where all invasive species were managed immediately. Ross Cuthbert, lead researcher from the School of Biological Sciences at Queen's University Belfast, explains: "It is unsurprising that delays to management have cost hundreds of billions of pounds. "By the time we see the impact that invasive species are having on the environment, it is often too late as they have already established and spread widely. It is difficult to convince decision makers to invest in something that is not yet a problem, but our research clearly shows the value in taking a preventative approach. "We've seen an annual increase in spending towards management of invasive species, with over \$3.3 billion spent in 2020 worldwide. Investing earlier to prevent or control biological invasions before invasive species spread uncontrollably could save trillions on a global scale. "It goes without saying that this would also be of huge benefit to preserving our ecosystems. Conservation strategies should focus on how to intervene efficiently at an early stage to prevent invasive species." The research team, which involved 17 institutions worldwide, constructed and used a new, global database compiling economic costs caused by invasive species allowing for relevant comparisons across different scales and contexts. Unlike previous studies, the team quantified costs according to different management types using this database at a global scale. They also developed and applied a new model to predict the additional costs of management delay with the available data. The team hopes that the findings will stimulate more timely management of biological invasions, save money while supporting ecosystem conservation. Cuthbert said: "Once invasive species have established and are spreading, it can be difficult to eradicate them. Delayed control measures are often not only costly, but are also frequently unsuccessful in the long-term."

Bill Gates presents a roadmap for preventing another pandemic

I believe that Covid-19 can be the last pandemic (and) I know that might be hard to believe while we're still trying to get (the present outbreak) under control," says Bill Gates in a new book about the lessons learnt in the past two years and how to apply them to avoid a future disaster. "How To Prevent The Next Pandemic" (Penguin/Allen Lane), to be published on May 3, is a clear and hopeful plan of what countries, government leaders, and individuals must do to help prevent another pandemic. Grounded in his first-hand experience with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's response to Covid-19, the plan is ambitious and wide-ranging, outlining the innovations we need to save lives and to stop outbreaks early and equitably. "The last two

years have caused unbelievable amounts of hardship around the world, and it's not easy to feel optimistic when you've endured the misery that so many people have experienced. But whenever I see the suffering that COVID has created-every time I read about the latest death toll or hear about someone who lost their job or drive by a school that is closed-I can't help but think: We don't have to do this again." The Microsoft co-founder writes in his "GatesNotes" blog post. "This is something I've been thinking about for a long time, and Covid has only made it clearer that the world needs to prioritize eliminating pandemics as a threat to humanity. I've been following Covid since the early days of the outbreak, working with experts from inside and out of the Gates Foundation who are championing

a more equitable response and have been fighting infectious diseases for decades. I've learned a lot in the process-both about this pandemic and how we stop the next one-and I want to share what I've heard with people. So, I started writing a book about how we can make sure that no one suffers through a pandemic ever again. "In the book, I lay out the specific steps we can take to not only stop future pandemics but, in the process, provide better health care for everyone around the world. I outline the lessons we can learn from this pandemic, the innovations we need to save lives, and the new tools we need to stop pathogens early and equitably. I also tell you about my regular conversations with public health leaders like Anthony Fauci and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, my view

of the vaccines that are stemming the tide, and what it's been like to become the subject of conspiracy theories. "The goal of no more pandemics ever is ambitious, but the progress we've made over the last two years-including the huge leaps forward we've made with vaccines and the knowledge we've gained about respiratory illnesses-has already set us on a path to success. The world now understands how seriously we should take pandemics, and momentum is on our side. No one needs to be convinced that an infectious disease could kill millions of people or shut down the global economy. If we make the right choices and investments, we can make COVID-19 the last pandemic," Gates writes.

Before Gates tackled the urgent topic of climate science, he was a preeminent voice alerting the public to the threat of a future pandemic. He warned us in a now-famous 2015 TED Talk (which has been viewed more than 36 million times) that the world was not ready for the next outbreak. The co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, he has spent more than 20 years working on global health and development issues including pandemic prevention, disease eradication and water, sanitation, and hygiene. He is also the founder of Breakthrough Energy, an effort to commercialize clean energy and other climate-related technologies

international

POLICE PROBE BOMB THREATS TO 8 SCHOOLS AROUND WASHINGTON DC

The police in Washington DC said that they were "working to thoroughly investigate" bomb threats made to eight schools around the US capital.

Washington | Agencies The police in Washington DC said that they were "working to thoroughly investigate" bomb threats made to eight schools around the US capital. The public schools and charter schools had all been cleared with no hazardous material found, the Metropolitan Police Department tweeted late Wednesday. The investigation is underway with the help of federal agencies. Several DC schools, including Dunbar High School, were evacuated on Wednesday afternoon after Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff was escorted out of an event at Dunbar High School on Tuesday due to a



bomb threat. "These are troublesome incidents that we take very seriously," Lewis D Ferebee, chancellor of DC Public Schools, tweeted on Wednesday. More than a dozen historically black col-

leges and universities nationwide also received bomb threats in the early days of this month dedicated to honoring achievements and struggles of African-Americans throughout US history.

AMERICANS WERE NEVER CLEAR ON WHAT THEY WERE TRYING TO ACHIEVE IN AFGHANISTAN: IMRAN

New Delhi: Criticising the US over its 20-year war in Afghanistan, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that Washington had no clear aims in the war-torn country, The News reported. In an interview with Dr Eric Li, Director of the Advisory Committee of the China Institute of Fudan University, Khan said the US mission in Afghanistan should have been over once they killed former Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. "So what they were doing after that, none of the Americans knew." "Anyone who understood the history of Afghanistan would never have done what the Americans did," he added. The Pakistan premier said he was against the military solution to Afghanistan from day one. "They (Americans) were never clear on what they were trying to achieve in Afghanistan. Was it nation-building, democracy, or the emancipation of Afghan women? They had no clear aims," Khan added. When the aim of a mission is unclear, it ultimately leads to "failure", as in the case of the US invasion of Afghanistan for the "war on terror", he added, the report said. Imran Khan said the entire US mission was based on a "false premise". But now, he said, the Americans are unable to differentiate between the general population and the Taliban, thus forcing the country towards a potential humanitarian crisis. If there is chaos in Afghanistan and the Taliban government gets weaker, it cannot take on international terrorist organisations," he said.



S Korean rights watchdog recommends vegan meal options in schools

South Korea's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has recommended the Education Ministry amend the school meal system to provide vegan lunch options to students, officials said on Thursday.



Seoul | Agencies South Korea's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has recommended the Education Ministry amend the school meal system to provide vegan lunch options to students, officials said on Thursday. The recommendation came after a civic group advocating vegan meal choices for students filed a petition with the NHRC in June against the Ministry and some local education offices, including Seoul and the surrounding Gyeonggi Province, reports Yonhap News Agency. The group claimed vegan

students' right to health has been violated because of school meals that do not provide vegan options. The NHRC said it is difficult to tell that vegan students' right to health has been infringed upon, but still made the recommendation, saying the best interests of the child should be considered foremost in all children-related activities. Vegan children should be able to choose school meals created with nutritional value that fits their beliefs, the NHRC said. "It is not impossible to guarantee vegan options with school meals in reality," the watchdog said, noting that some local education offices have already done so on a trial basis.

SUPPORT FOR S KOREAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES TIED AT 35%

Lee Jae-myung, the presidential nominee of South Korea's ruling Democratic Party, is tied with his rival Yoon Seok-youl of the main opposition People Power Party at 35 per cent support, a survey showed on Thursday. Seoul: Lee Jae-myung, the presidential nominee of South Korea's ruling Democratic Party, is tied with his rival Yoon Seok-youl of the main opposition People Power Party at 35 per cent support, a survey showed on Thursday. Lee's support was unchanged from two weeks ago, while Yoon gained 1 percentage point, according to the poll of 1,007 adults conducted Monday to Wednesday by Embrain Public, Kstat Research, Korea Research and Hankook Research. Ahn Cheol-soo of the minor opposition People's Party garnered 9 per cent support, down 1 percentage point from two weeks ago, reports Yonhap News Agency. Sim Sang-jeung of the minor progressive Justice Party gained 2 percentage points to post 4 per cent. When asked to pick the candidate most likely to win, 43 per cent of the respondents chose Yoon, while 34 per cent opted for Lee. The survey also found that 45 per cent said an opposition candidate must win the March 9 election, while 42 per cent said a ruling party candidate should win the election. When asked to assess President Moon Jae-in's job performance, 43 per cent approved while 51 per cent disapproved.



White House following Canada trucker protests 'very closely'

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that the US government is watching the protests staged by truckers in Canada "very closely."

Washington | Agencies White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that the US government is watching the protests staged by truckers in Canada "very closely." Speaking to reporters during a daily briefing, Psaki expressed concern over a trucker blockade at the Ambassador Bridge, Canada's busiest link to the US accounting for roughly a quarter of trade between the two countries, reports Xinhua news agency. "The blockade poses a risk to supply chains for the



auto industry because the bridge is a key conduit for motor vehicles, components, and parts; and delays risk disrupting auto production," she said, adding that they are also "tracking potential disruptions to US agricultural exports from Michigan into Canada". The ongoing protests in Ottawa have paralysed parts of the Canadian capital over the past two weeks, as truckers honked in anger over Covid-19 vaccine mandates. Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson declared a state of emergency on Sunday, say-

S Korean Prez believes Kim-Biden summit is 'matter of time'

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on Thursday he believes that his US counterpart Joe Biden and North Korea leader Kim Jong-un will meet eventually to discuss Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program despite an ongoing impasse between the two countries. Moon made the remark in a written interview with Yonhap News Agency, saying the Biden administration has repeatedly expressed its commitment to reengaging the North in dialogue. "Since dialogue is the only way to resolve problems, a meeting between President Biden and Chairman Kim is expected to take place eventually. It is just a matter of time. President Biden has repeatedly expressed his willingness to actively engage in talks to resolve North Korea issues." The US is also making practical efforts to contact North Korea while consistently emphasizing that the issue of denuclearization on the

ing the situation was "completely out of control." The US Department of Homeland Security has reportedly warned law enforcement across the country that similar protests could soon begin here. A bulletin issued on Tuesday by the Department to state and local officials said that the agency "has received reports of truck drivers planning to potentially block roads in major metropolitan cities in the US in protest of, among other things, vaccine mandates for truck drivers". "While there are currently no indications of planned violence, if hundreds of trucks converge in a major metropolitan city, the potential exists to severely disrupt transportation, federal government operations, commercial facilities, and emergency services through gridlock and potential counter-protests."

South Korean Peninsula is one of the priorities of his administration's foreign policy and that the US is ready to meet North Korea anytime, anywhere without preconditions," he added. US-North Korea talks have stalled since a second summit between then President Donald Trump and Kim ended without a deal in Hanoi in February 2019. Moon said that Biden also demonstrated his willingness and readiness to resume talks with the North by appointing a special representative for the North, Ambassador Sung Kim, following his summit in Washington last May. "The Biden administration's North Korea policy is a result of close cooperation with my Administration, and we greatly welcome and support this very pragmatic and realistic approach aimed at denuclearization and institutionalization of peace on the Peninsula which arose from an objective assessment of the collapse of the summit in Hanoi," he said.



OMICRON IMPACT: 'SOME LOSS' IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY MOMENTUM: RBI GOVERNOR

Covid's ongoing third wave has led to "some loss of momentum in economic activity" which has been reflected in high frequency indicators, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Covid's ongoing third wave has led to "some loss of momentum in economic activity" which has been reflected in high frequency indicators, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday. He also pointed out that demand for contact-intensive services is still muted. In his policy statement post the Monetary Policy Committee's bi-monthly meeting, Das said: "The MPC flagged the potential downside risks to economic activity from the highly contagious Omicron variant. Reassuringly, the symptoms have remained relatively mild and the pace



of infections is moderating as quickly as it surged. "There is, however, some loss of momentum in economic activity as reflected in high frequency indicators such as purchasing managers' indices for both manufacturing and services, finished steel consumption and sales of tractors, two-wheelers and passen-

ger vehicles." Going forward, he said that positive impulses for quickening the pace of recovery emanate from buoyant 'Rabi' prospects, robust export demand, accommodative monetary and liquidity conditions, improving credit offtake, and the continued push on capital expenditure and

infrastructure in the Union Budget 2022-23.

Furthermore, Das said that India's GDP is expected to grow at 7.8 per cent in FY2022-23.

Accordingly, the real GDP growth is projected at 17.2 per cent in Q1FY23, at 7 per cent in Q2, at 4.3 per cent in Q3 and Q4 at 4.5 per cent.

"In India, real GDP growth at 9.2 per cent for 2021-22 takes it modestly above the level of GDP in 2019-20. Private consumption, the mainstay of domestic demand, continues to trail its pre-pandemic level," he said.

"The persistent increase in international commodity prices, surge in volatility of global financial markets and global supply bottlenecks can exacerbate risks to the outlook."

In addition, Das said that going forward, the government's thrust on capital expenditure and exports are expected to enhance productive capacity and strengthen aggregate demand.

"This would also crowd in private investment. The conducive financial conditions engendered by the RBI's policy actions will provide impetus to investment activity."

Hijab row: Avoid protests: Maharashtra Home Minister

Stating that it is not in the interest of Maharashtra and its people to stage protests, the minister added, "I appeal to all political parties and organisations to cooperate in this regard and ensure peace."

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Amid the ongoing row over hijab in Karnataka, Maharashtra home minister Dilip Walse Patil has appealed to political parties against staging protests or disturbing peace for political gains. It is "not appropriate" to stage protests in Maharashtra over any issue that has roots in some other state, said Walse Patil. Stating that it is not in the interest of Maharashtra and its people to stage protests, the minister added, "I appeal to all political parties and organisations to cooperate in this regard and ensure peace."

The minister added that education has to be the sole priority when one goes to a school or college, and everyone should adhere to the rules as prescribed by the schools or educational insti-



tutes concerned. The Maharashtra Police are keeping a close tab and taking steps to ensure the situation remains normal in the state, said the minister.

On Wednesday, state environment minister Aaditya Thackeray said prescribed uniforms in schools, colleges or other institutions must be followed, and religious and political issues must not be brought into schools and colleges. Protests for and against the 'hijab' had intensified in parts of Karnataka and turned violent in some places

on Tuesday after the state government last week issued an order making uniforms prescribed by it or management of private institutions mandatory for its students in schools and pre-university colleges. The BJP and Congress had hit out at each other over the 'hijab' controversy. Activists of the Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Eltehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) had put up banners in Maharashtra's Beed city on Monday in support of 'hijab' for female Muslim students.

Lata Mangeshkar's ashes immersed in Nashik's Ramkund

At a solemn rite, the family members of the late singer Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar immersed her ashes in the sacred Pavitra Ramkund on the banks of the Godavari River, here on Thursday morning.

Nashik | Agencies

At a solemn rite, the family members of the late singer Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar immersed her ashes in the sacred Pavitra Ramkund on

the banks of the Godavari River, here on Thursday morning. Her nephew, Adinath Mangeshkar, sister Asha Bhosale and other kin were present at the brief religious ceremony. Earlier, a small prayer ceremony was conducted by Hindu priests with the family and a few close persons in attendance.

Later, the ashes were immersed in the Pavitra Ramkund where it is said that Lord Rama used to take his daily bath during the 14-year exile. Lata Didi, as she was fondly called by all, passed away at the Breach Candy Hospital on February 6 after prolonged spells of illness including Covid-19.

That evening she was accorded a public funeral

with full state honours in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, various Central and State cabinet ministers, Bollywood celebs and others, besides thousands of her fans and admirers, at Shivaji Park. The following day, Adinath Mangeshkar collected the copper urns containing the 'asthi' (ashes) and finally immersed them at the Pavitra Ramkund here.

In the past, the ashes of several leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, YB Chavan and others were immersed in the same holy spot.

Life in jail for jilted suitor who burnt alive Maha woman lecturer

A court in Maharashtra's Wardha has sentenced, to life imprisonment, the convict in the sensational incident in which a young woman lecturer was doused with petrol and set afire by him on a road outside her college in Hinganghat town two years ago, a top law officer said on Thursday.

Team Absolute | Nagpur

A court in Maharashtra's Wardha has sentenced, to life imprisonment, the convict in the sensational incident in which a young woman lecturer was doused with petrol and set afire by him on a road outside her college in Hinganghat town two years ago, a top law officer said on Thursday.

"The court has found the prime accused Vikesh Nagrale guilty and sentenced him to life imprisonment, implying jail till death, for the offence committed two years ago," Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam told media persons.

The Wardha court also slapped a fine of Rs 5,000 on Nagrale and declined to give any remission in the sentence for the time spent in jail as undertrial after he was arrested with-



in hours of committing the heinous crime. The family members of the victim - who were present in the court when the verdict was pronounced - said they accepted the ver-

dict but had expected the death penalty for the convict. Many locals, women, students, activists and supporters of the family were also present outside the court in large num-

bers. Nikam, who had strongly argued for the death sentence, said the government will study the detailed court order before taking the next step of challenging the verdict.

NUPUR JOSHI WEIGHS IN ON KARNATAKA HIJAB ROW

Actress Nupur Joshi, who is known for featuring in shows like 'Rakhi', 'Do Hanson Ka Jodaa', 'Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai', shares her strong views on the Karnataka hijab row which is creating headlines these days.

Team Absolute | Mumbai

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shares her strong views on the Karnataka hijab row which is creating headlines these days. It all start-

ed after Muskan Khan, a second-year B. Com student of Mandya's pre-University College, Karnataka, was heckled by a group of students wearing saffron stoles on Tuesday for entering a college in Karnataka's Mandya wearing a burqa. When they started shouting 'Jai Shri Ram' in loud voices, Muskan responded by yelling 'Allah-hu-Akbar' Nupur feels the education system shouldn't be painted or discriminated in the name of religion. She says: "If today our youth is fighting among themselves in the name of religion, then we need to think how poorly we are educated. Education always helps us to grow and adopt the behaviour of

respect and independence. The Karnataka hijab row is actually putting a question on the mentality of we Indians."

She in fact took to her social media account to share the importance of students' freedom in all aspects. The actress wrote: "I feel education shouldn't be painted in the name of burqa or bhagwas. We should be encouraged to have a uniform way through the learning experience. Students are the building blocks of our society. They should have a free mind, a logical one to pursue their interests. Nowhere the veins of religious or communal distress should come in way.

Amol Palekar admitted to Pune hospital with Covid, condition stable

Bollywood's Everyman of the 1970s, veteran actor and director Amol Palekar, known for Hindi classics such as 'Rajinigandha', 'Chitchor' and 'Gol Maal', has been admitted to the Dinanath Mangeshkar Hospital here because of Covid-19. The 77-year-old actor's condition is said to be stable. Palekar has also worked and contributed to Marathi mainstream films and parallel cinema, made his debut in 1971 with the film

Pune | Agencies

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'Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe'. He then stepped into Bollywood with Basu Bhattacharya's 'Rajinigandha' opposite Rakhee in 1974. He was popular for starring in "middle-class family comedies" such as 'Gol Maal' and 'Naram Garam', and was also seen in films such as 'Gharonda', 'Shrimaan Shrimati', 'Rang Birangi'.

Aurangabad's labour of love: 'Nullah' clean-up brings Kham river back to life

Aurangabad | Agencies

Residents of Aurangabad in Maharashtra got enthusiastically involved over many Saturdays early this year to clean up the Kham river as part of the drive to restore its ecological health, sustainability and aesthetic value. The restoration campaign -- 'Our River, Kham River' -- started in January under the supervision of Astik Kumar Pandey, Municipal Commissioner of Aurangabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), and featured a range of beautification activities.



through a toxic brew of domestic waste, animal carcasses, industrial pollution, population growth, rampant encroachment, and increasing urbanisation. Water shortages galvanised Commissioner Pandey to engage residents, social groups and NGOs in reviving the river by educating them about its historic significance to their city. Between 200 and 250 showed up every Saturday from 8 am to 11 am to pick up dry waste (150 tonnes, according to the AMC's sanitation department) and plant trees, while earthmovers, JCBs and tippers did the heavy lifting. The public lent gaiety to the proceedings by singing songs about religious devotion and environmental awareness. Some even shook a leg. The AMC estimated that the project would have cost Rs 13 crore if it had been done through contracts given to private stakeholders but instead cost the city only 1 crore, thanks to the involvement of the residents. Nandkishor Bhombe, head of solid waste management at AMC, noted the project's environmental importance, "I am happy the people of Aurangabad have shown such dedication towards the river and I insist they continue to

show the same concern in the time to come. The demands of future generations will get fulfilled only if we take good care of our natural resources." Ramesh Gaikwad, a sanitation worker, was amazed with all the support and engagement from the public. "The city has always been divided by religious differences. But over the last decade, people have started to show a sense of love towards their city. This has been possible due to education, awareness and empowerment of women. I have seen all these factors contributing to the rejuvenation of Kham river recently. Creating an amphitheatre out of tyres and painting the story of Kham are some unique ideas by the women and youth which were given the green flag by the corporation." Planting Miyawaki forests The project also involved planting diverse saplings along the river's banks using the Miyawaki method (two to four saplings per square metre) to bolster biodiversity. As many as 10,000 bamboo trees -- known for increasing afforestation and playing a role in combating climate change -- have been planted along the Kham. "This type of plantation has helped us plant all varieties at closer distances. As the Miyawaki forest sustains itself, it will need fewer efforts in the future." Bhombe told 101Reporters. Aditya Tiwari, an ecologist working in Aurangabad, underscored the Miyawaki method's relevance. "The Japanese method of tree plantation has become the centre of attention in the Cantonment Board area. We are focusing on the ecological transformation of the river via urban plantation."

Government of Maharashtra Office of the Director General of Police, Maharashtra State Maharashtra State Police Headquarters, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Colaba, Mumbai 400 001. e- TENDER NOTICE for Extension - I The Maharashtra Police invites proposal from reputed and experienced companies to participate in the competitive bidding process of following e- Tender :- Sr. No. e - Tender ID Item description Remarks Deadline 1. 2022\_DGPMU\_760609\_1 WEAPON MOUNTED IR + VISIBLE TORCH Extension - I 16/02/2022- 2. However, sufficient bidders have not participated in the above e-tender. Hence, as per the purchase policy of the Government of Maharashtra, the Extension - I has been given for the above tender. 3. All interested bidders are requested to take note of the same. 4. Tender submission will be made online. For detailed Tender documents, interested bidders may kindly visit https://mahatenders.gov.in Place : Mumbai. Dated : 09 /02/2022. (R. S. Changan) Desk Officer, For Director General of Police, Maharashtra State, Mumbai. ROC-2021-22 / No. 5 / C 4256



# Oscars 2022 ceremony won't require Covid vaccinations

Los Angeles | Agencies

This year's Oscars ceremony will not require in-person attendees to provide proof of vaccination against Covid. After a 2021 ceremony that saw the Academy Awards downsize to a smaller gathering at Los Angeles' Union Station, the Oscars will return to its traditional setting in the Dolby Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard for its upcoming ceremony on March 27.

It is not yet known if the audience size might be reduced this year. Last year's ceremony featured strict Covid testing and masking policies for in-person attendees, in accordance with health and safety protocols. In the year since, vaccines against the virus have become widely available to the general public.

Guidelines encouraging proof of vaccination have become commonplace for large-scale events, especially in Los Angeles.

Although the Academy will suggest attendees to be vaccinated, the 2022 Oscars ceremony will also require attendees to be tested prior to attending, with unvaccinated guests having additional and more stringent testing requirements.

Under this rule, the Academy is technically complying with Los Angeles County's policy on "indoor mega events", which require either full vaccination status or day-of-negative COVID-19 tests to all attendees ages 2 and older.

However, it should be noted that other awards events this season, such as the Screen Actors Guild and Critics Choice Association, are still requiring attendees to provide proof of vaccination for their ceremonies.

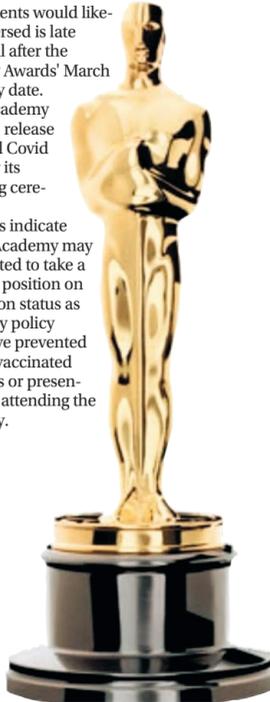
L.A. County is still some time away from lifting its indoor mask mandate.

On Tuesday, public health director Barbara Ferrer indicated barring extremely low case levels, the earliest time that mask

requirements would likely be reversed is late April, well after the Academy Awards' March ceremony date.

The Academy has yet to release an official Covid policy for its upcoming ceremony.

Reports indicate that the Academy may have elected to take a less strict position on vaccination status as a no-entry policy could have prevented some unvaccinated nominees or presenters from attending the ceremony.



## WHEN AMANDA SEYFRIED 'BIT' CHANNING TATUM

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Channing Tatum has said that his 'Dear John' co-star Amanda Seyfried "bit" him but he didn't give any details as to how or why.

Asked if he's been bitten by a co-star before, he said: "Amanda Seyfried, I think. I'm almost positive she bit me."

For his latest movie, 'Dog', Channing admitted his co-star had left him with a scar, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

Talk show host Jimmy Kimmel asked if the dog had bitten him and he said: "A lot. Three times in the movie. Then I actually got bit for real. I have a little smiley face scar on my buttocks."

The 'Magic Mike' star says it has "gone horribly awry" whenever he's worked with animals in the past, recalling a scene in 'Hail, Caesar!' when the dog in his scene had to bark at the end of his line.

He noted: "We sat there for six hours and the dog just wouldn't bark."

Channing was sporting a shaved head on the show and admitted the first time he had his locks shorn when he was modelling, it led to him being inundated with offers of work.

He said: "I started working all the time," Channing said. "I wasn't getting any work. And then I shaved my head and I started getting all the work."



## SNOOP DOGG NOW OWNS DEATH ROW RECORDS

Los Angeles | Agencies

Rap artist Snoop Dogg has acquired the brand of Death Row Records from MNRK Music Group. Investment firm Blackstone manages the private equity funds which controls the label.

As per Variety, the terms of the transaction have not yet been disclosed. However, a source close to the situation told Variety that the rapper's acquisition of the Death Row brand is only the first part of a transaction and that further developments will see him also acquiring some of the label's music rights - his own and unspecified other artists, a deal which will reach its culmination in the coming weeks.

Snoop Dogg, the new owner of Death Row Records, said in a statement accessed by Variety, "I am thrilled and appreciative of the opportunity to acquire the iconic and culturally significant Death Row Records brand, which has immense

untapped future value. It feels good to have ownership of the label I was part of at the beginning of my career and as one of the founding members."

"This is an extremely meaningful moment for me. I would like to personally thank the teams at Blackstone, MNRK and especially David Kestnbaum, who worked collaboratively with me over several months to make this exciting homecoming a reality. I'm looking forward to building the next chapter of Death Row Records", the statement further read.

David Kestnbaum, a Senior Managing Director at Blackstone, said, "We at Blackstone are strong supporters of the artist and creator community in our entertainment investments. We are excited to put the Death Row Records brand back in the hands of a legend like Snoop Dogg."

## Tara Reid to essay MI6 agent in British spy film 'Cold Sun'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Tara Reid is set to play an MI6 agent in upcoming espionage thriller 'Cold Sun'.

According to variety.com, Reid will play an inexperienced British spy called Marsha Ravencourt in the film, which has been billed as "Cagney and Lacey with a difference."

Jason Figgis will direct the feature, which is set to shoot this summer in the UK and Malta.

Reid, who has appeared in the Sharknado and American Pie franchises, is joined by Patrick Bergin, Rita Tushingham, Ian Ogilvy and Gabriella Wright in the film.

Wright will play an equally green Interpol agent called Cheyenne 'Chey' Marchand who joins forces with Reid's character to take down an international gang of murderous criminals.

"Two inexperienced female operatives are thrust into a violent world, they will have to learn fast if they want to survive," reads the logline.

The plot will see Ravencourt and Marchand posted to Malta to hunt down an assassin hellbent on murdering the British foreign secretary. Soon the women find themselves in a world



of greed and luxury presided over by a ruthless oil tycoon backed by the Russian mafia who has engineered a global plot to assassinate politicians across the world.

## America Ferrera joins Margot Robbie, Ryan Gosling in 'Barbie' movie



Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood actress America Ferrera has been roped into play opposite Margot Robbie in 'Barbie', the upcoming movie from Warner Bros, Mattel and Robbie's

LuckyChap Entertainment. Greta Gerwig is directing the movie, from a script she co-wrote with Noah Baumbach, with Robbie playing the titular toy doll and Ryan Gosling playing Ken, reports variety.com.

It is unknown who Ferrera will play as details of the film's plot have been kept fantastically wrapped in plastic.

Best known for her Emmy-winning work on screen in projects like 'Ugly Betty', 'Real Women Have Curves', and as a voice actor in the popular 'How to Train Your Dragon' franchise.

Ferrera expanded her resume by producing the hit workplace comedy 'Superstore' (which she also starred in for five of the show's six seasons) and Netflix's 'Gentefied'.

She also stepped behind the camera to direct multiple episodes of both shows. Ferrera is set to make her feature directorial debut with 'I Am Not Your Perfect

Mexican Daughter', an adaptation of the New York Times bestselling novel, by author Erika Sanchez, who will serve as a co-producer on the film.

## Adam Driver, Penelope Cruz, Shailene Woodley board Michael Mann's 'Ferrari'

Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood stars Adam Driver, Penelope Cruz and Shailene Woodley have joined Michael Mann's racing film 'Ferrari'.

The big-budget biopic follows ex-race car driver and auto manufacturing giant Enzo Ferrari in the summer of 1957, reports variety.com.

With his marriage in crisis over the mourning of a son, and the threat of bankruptcy looming over the company he and his wife built 10 years earlier, Ferrari embarks on a bold race - the Mille Miglia, 1,000 miles across Italy.



Driver replaces Hugh Jackman, who had initially

signed on to play the title character. Cruz plays Enzo's wife, Laura Ferrari, and Woodley plays mistress Lina Lardi.

STX nabbed worldwide rights to the film. Mann will direct the script written by himself and Troy Kennedy Martin, based on Brock Yates' book 'Enzo Ferrari: The Man and the Machine.'

Michael Mann said in a statement, "Being able to have these wonderfully talented artists, actors Adam Driver, Penelope Cruz and Shailene Woodley, bring to life these unique characters on location in Modena and the Emilia-Romagna is a vision fulfilled."

## ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Eva Longoria



## DOMINANT INDIA SEEK ODI SERIES SWEEP AGAINST WEST INDIES

Ahmedabad | Agencies

**A** dominant India will be looking to complete a series sweep against the West Indies in the third and final match of the series at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Friday. In the ongoing series, India have been bailed out by the bowlers while West Indies haven't been able to get the desired fight from their batters. With Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer out of their isolation period after recovering from Covid-19, expect India to make further experiments now that they have an unassailable lead in the series. If Dhawan returns, it will be India's new opening pair after Rohit Sharma-Ishan Kishan in the first match and then Rishabh Pant becoming a surprise partner for Sharma in the second match. Virat Kohli will be itching to get a big knock after two lean showings while Suryakumar Yadav will be aiming to carry forward his



good show in the middle-order apart from KL Rahul making runs in the middle overs. In terms of bowling, India have done well to take wickets

in a heap in the middle overs and make some strikes in the first ten overs, something which was lacking in the series against South Africa.

Prasidh Krishna has been impressive in both matches, especially in the second one. With his hit-the-deck ability combined with hard lengths broke the back of West Indies' batting order. Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur have supported him well while spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Washington Sundar have been handy. For West Indies' biggest headache has been the lack of contributions from the batters. After being skittled for 176 in the first ODI, the visitors were unable to chase down 237. In both matches, the lower-order batters tried to get the team back in the match but couldn't do so. Their bowlers, especially Odean Smith, Alzarri Joseph and Akeal Hosein, put up a good show but would like for their batters to stand up to the occasion. Overall, India will like to tick some boxes in the dead rubber while West Indies will be aiming for a better show with the bat to gain some crucial Super League points too.

## World No.1 Novak Djokovic named in the entry list for Indian Wells Open

California (USA) | Agencies

**W**orld No. 1 and five-time Indian Wells champion Novak Djokovic along with the 2022 Australian Open champions Spain's Rafael Nadal and Australian Ashleigh Barty are included in the BNP Paribas Open tournament entry list. The event will be held from March 7-20 at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden in California, United States.

However, the organisers emphasised that the vaccinations will be required for the event, but made it clear that players' rules and protocols will be decided by the ATP in accordance with US Government restrictions.

Djokovic failed to participate in the Australian Open 2022 as he was deported by the Australian government last month for not disclosing his Covid-19 vaccination status. On the men's side, three-



time champion Nadal (2007, 2009, 2013) will compete at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden for the first time since March 2019, as he was unable to participate in the 2021 tournament due to a foot injury. A power-packed lineup of ATP Top-10 players will join Nadal in looking to put together a breakthrough performance in Tennis Paradise.

The 2021 US Open champion and 2022 Australian Open finalist Daniil Medvedev (World No. 2), 2021 ATP Finals winner

Alexander Zverev (World No. 3), and 2021 French Open finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas (World No. 4) will each be in search of their maiden title in the desert. Reigning BNP Paribas Open champion Cameron Norrie (World No. 13) will look to replicate his extraordinary 2021 title run, in which he won his first Masters 1000 crown.

On the women's side, Barty, the WTA World No. 1, will seek her first title in the desert after sitting out the tournament's 2021 edition in October.

## FIH Hockey Pro League: Dutch, Indian federations to seek alternate dates

Team Absolute | Mumbai

**W**ith the Netherlands women's team deciding not to travel to Bhubaneswar for their upcoming double-header against India in the FIH Hockey Pro League in Bhubaneswar, the FIH has invited both the federations to work on finding alternate dates for the matches. In case the two federations -- Dutch Hockey Association (KNHB) and Hockey India -- agree on alternate dates, India will be awarded points for the two matches. "We can confirm that the Dutch Hockey Association (KNHB) has informed FIH that their medical committee has issued a negative advice for intercontinental travel. Following this advice, KNHB has announced that the Dutch women's team will not travel to Bhubaneswar, India, for the upcoming FIH Hockey Pro League scheduled on 19 and 20 February 2022," the FIH informed in a statement. "As always in such cases, FIH has invited both National Associations - KNHB



and Hockey India - to try to find alternative dates," it said. The FIH said it will follow the rules related to a team withdrawing from the event. "In the event of a team withdrawing, the following applies 1. the opponent will be awarded two victories and therefore six points; 2. The withdrawing team will have to pay financial compensation for the costs and the loss of income generated by their non-participation," an FIH spokesperson said.

## PREMIER LEAGUE

### Man City move 12 points clear at top as Villa and Leeds produce 6-goal thriller

London | Agencies

**D**efending champion Manchester City moved 12 points ahead of Liverpool at the top of the Premier League thanks to a comfortable 2-0 win at home to Brentford. Manchester City have 60 points from 24 games while Liverpool, with two games in hand, are second on 48. Pep Guardiola's side was always in control on Wednesday night, although it wasn't until the 40th minute that Riyad Mahrez put them ahead from the penalty spot after Raheem Sterling had been fouled. Kevin de Bruyne assured the win in the 69th minute, sliding home a rebound after Sterling's shot had been saved. Southampton twice came from



behind before claiming a deserved 3-2 win away to Tottenham with Che Adams netting an 83rd-minute winner after Armando Broja and Mohamed Elyounoussi had cancelled out an own goal and Son Heung-min's 70th-minute goal for Tottenham, reports Xinhua.

Teemu Pukki put Norwich ahead after just 38 seconds of their home game against Crystal Palace, but Wilfred Zaha's 60th-minute equal-

izer means Norwich slip back into the bottom three. Aston Villa and Leeds United produced a thriller, which began with Leeds taking the lead through Daniel James only for Philippe Coutinho to lead a Villa fightback, by scoring the equaliser and then setting up Jacob Ramsey for two goals to make it 3-1, before James' second of the match made it 3-2 at the break. Diego Llorente made it 3-3 after lashing home a loose ball following a corner in the 63rd minute before Coutinho limped off with a knee injury. Villa defender Ezri Konsa was then sent off for a second yellow card in injury time. On Tuesday night, Newcastle continued their recovery and moved out of the relegation zone with a 3-1 win at home to

Everton, who are now in deep trouble themselves.

#### COPA DEL REY: FIRST BLOOD TO BETIS AFTER SEMI-FINAL FIRST-LEG WIN

**Madrid:** Goals from Borja Iglesias and William Carvalho helped Betis come back from a goal down to take a 2-1 win in the first leg of their Copa del Rey semi-final away to Rayo Vallecano. Betis always looked slightly better than their rivals and are now clear favorites to qualify for this season's final after overcoming a poor start. The game was just five minutes old when Rayo took the lead: Iván Balliu produced a 40-yard run down the right, hurdling one challenge and crossed for Alvaro Garcia to nod the ball past Rui Silva and into the net on Wednesday night.

## I TOOK THE DECISIONS IN AUSTRALIA BUT SOMEONE ELSE TOOK CREDIT: AJINKYA RAHANE

**New Delhi:** Ajinkya Rahane, the former India Test vice-captain took a cryptic dig at certain people, saying that 'someone else took the credit' for the crucial decisions he made on the field or in the dressing room, during India's historic 2-1 win in the 2020/21 Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia. With regular captain Virat Kohli back home to be there for the birth of his first child, Rahane took over the reins and led the Team India, who were rolled over for 36 in the first Test in Adelaide, spiritedly in Australia. Leading from the front, Rahane smashed a magnificent hundred as India won the second match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground by eight wickets. India continued to fight back, drawing the Sydney Test and winning the final match in Gabba. The then captain Rahane earned accolades from fans and experts for leading a heavily depleted team not just at the MCG but through the remainder of the four-match series. Notably, India lost many key players through the series to injuries but still emerged victorious despite all the setbacks. "I know what I've done there. I don't need to tell anyone. That's not my nature to go and take credit. Yes, there were some things that I took the decisions on the field or in the dressing room but someone else took the credit for it," Rahane said in an episode of 'Backstage With Boria'. "What was important for me was that we won the series. That was a historical series and for me, that was really special," he added.



## Pranavi shoots career best 65, but Gaurika leads by 3 in second leg of WPGT

Hyderabad | Agencies

**P**ranavi Urs, who spent almost a year waiting for her wrist to mend, showed that she will be a big factor this season as she shot a brilliant personal best bogey free 7-under 65 in the second round at the Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club, during the first tournament of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, 2022. Pranavi, who had a modest 75 in the first round, is now 4-under 140 but still trails first round leader Gaurika Bishnoi (66-71) by three shots. Gaurika was also going great guns before a double bogey on the Par-4 10th set her back. Amateur Sneha Singh, a local here, shot 70 on the heels of her first round 71. At 3-under 141 she is sole third, while Hitaashee Bakshi (74-70) is even par 144 and placed fourth. Pranavi, who started the 2021 season with a runner-up finish and a win in her first two events, then suffered a wrist fracture that virtually finished her season. Gaurika, who had a fine 66 on the first day, had a bogey on the second and a double on the 10th. Her birdies came on 5th, 7th, 14th and 16th.



## ATP TOUR: ISNER BLASTS 30 ACES ON WAY TO QUARTERS IN DALLAS

**Dallas (USA):** American star John Isner blasted 30 aces and won 89 percent of his first service points as he defeated South Africa's Kevin Anderson in three hard-fought sets at the ATP Dallas Open here. Isner, who did not face a single breakpoint, had an opportunity to win the match in straight sets but came back strongly to win the slugfest between two of the game's top servers. Isner won 7-6(1), 6-7(7), 7-6(6) to reach the quarter-finals at the Styslinger/Altec Tennis Complex here. Isner had match point on his serve in the second-set tie-break but hit a double fault. But the home favourite, who lives within walking distance of the venue and trains at this facility when he is home in Dallas, fought until the end in front of a raucous crowd. Next up for the third seed will be a clash with one of two qualifiers. Canadian Vasek Pospisil will face Austrian Jurij Rodionov to earn a chance at taking down the American, according to a report on the ATP Tour website.



## 2022 IPL Auction important in preparing our base for next 5-6 years: Sanju Samson

Bengaluru | Agencies

**R**ajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson believes that the upcoming IPL 2022 mega auction is vastly important for them in order to build a base for the team for the next five to six years. The Jaipur-based franchise, who won the inaugural edition of the league in 2008, head into the two-day auction in Bengaluru scheduled for February 12 and 13 with INR 62 crore in their purse. Rajasthan had retained Samson, young India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and England wicketkeeper batter Jos Buttler in November last year. "This auction is really important because we know we could very well be preparing our base for the next 5-6 years. So, we've made sure to track everyone and give the opportunity to as many players as possible during the tri-



als. Our goal is to now target the ones we think align with our vision, can embrace our values, and help our team get back to the top," said Samson in a release. Mega auctions of the IPL have, in the past, seen some incredible picks, ones that may not have been the absolute superstars to the common eye but were vital in

the larger scheme of things, with diligent analytical backing. Former Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara, currently serving as Director of Cricket in the side, feels that the above-mentioned factors could once again come to the fore, and provide the team with further clarity as they build for the potential with a view to the long-term.

## RANJI TROPHY

### Ishant, Saha among notable absentees as Test players participate in the tournament

Team Absolute | New Delhi

**A**fter a gap of almost two years, the Ranji Trophy, India's domestic premier first-class competition is returning to action. The 87th edition of the Ranji Trophy, which will be split into two phases on either side of the Indian Premier League (IPL), will see many current Test players play in the competition. But wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha, pacer Ishant Sharma and all-rounder Hardik Pandya will be giving the competition a miss. With the Ranji Trophy now set to begin from February 17, many players who were a part of the Test side in South Africa have the chance to keep themselves busy in red-ball cricket ahead of the Sri Lanka series at home. Senior batters Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane will be appearing for their respective teams -- Saurashtra and Mumbai. Coincidentally, both



Saurashtra and Mumbai are in Elite Group D alongside Goa and Odisha and will play all matches in Ahmedabad. Featuring in the Ranji Trophy gives both Pujara and Rahane

a chance to get some valuable runs after being under scrutiny for long. Since cricket re-started after a Covid-19 enforced break, Rahane has scored just one century -- against Australia on

Boxing Day 2020 -- while Pujara, despite playing some gutsy knocks, is yet to reach a three-figure mark -- his last century was against Australia in Sydney 2019.



## Opportunities are almost endless in the entertainment industry: Kajal Pisal

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Kajal Pisal, who is currently seen in the TV show 'Sif Tum', enjoys playing different roles. She says: "As an actor I want to enjoy playing many different roles. Acting can offer us so many shades to play. You don't always have to be the bad or the good, you can change roles and can play every part you want as long as you are good enough in your role and can convince the public about your authenticity."

"Consequently, if you don't want to be negative anymore, you can just switch sides. You can also switch the movie genre if you feel like you need a change. In fact, opportunities are almost endless and chances are that you will not be able to try out all the different things the acting world has to offer in a lifetime." Kajal known for featuring in popular shows like 'Bade Achhe Lagte Hain', 'Saath Nibhaana Saathiya' and 'Naagin 5', among others says portraying different roles onscreen has helped her to explore herself in real life.

She adds: "Acting has always helped me to explore a lot about myself. Since I have been playing many different characters, I also got to learn a lot about myself. In fact, you really have to feel with the character and develop a high level of empathy if you want to represent the respective character in the best possible manner." Consequently, you will also develop a higher level of empathy in your private life since you will better understand what drives people and why they do the things they do. Being empathic is crucial to succeeding in life and by working as an actor, you can learn this important skill in a rather natural manner."

Pisal has also acted in Gujarati action movie 'Mijaa'.

## Sohum Shah: If you love your work then you enjoy every bit of it

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Actor Sohum Shah portrayed the interesting role of Bheema Bharti in Season 1 of 'Maharani' and he has talked about portraying interesting characters. He says if you love your work then you enjoy every bit of it. Sohum has featured in several acclaimed films such as 'Tumbbad' and 'Ship of Theseus'. He was even lauded for his performance in the series 'Maharani'.

Talking about playing Bheema again, he said: "Bheema Bharti has got massive amount of love for season one. People have praised the character and related to it. But I think if you take pressure as an actor then how you would be able to do your work and give justice to the character," Sohum informs.

"If you love your work then you enjoy it, it's not a pressure for you, you enjoy every bit of it and I am enjoying every bit of it, whatever it is. It's all part of my happiness," he adds.

Sohum has been reportedly shooting for 'Maharani 2' in different locations. Besides 'Maharani 2', Sohum also has Reema Kagti's 'Fallen' in the pipeline.



## HUMA QURESHI: 'I DON'T LIE' IS THE BIGGEST LIE IN ITSELF

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As her new web series 'Mithya' is releasing soon, actress Huma Qureshi explains how the story of the show goes beyond the general interpretation of the word 'lie' and explores the dangerous side of the truth that could alter reality. In the series, she is playing a teacher and how an ugly truth becomes a haunting element of her life and she takes refuge in lying to deal with the situation but it only gets messed up. Asked about her interpretation of the word 'Mithya' and Huma told reporter: "Look, everyone lies and that is the truth. If anyone is saying that I do not lie, that is the biggest lie in itself. But there are different shades of lie that we say in communication like a white lie, manipulation of the truth, helpful lie, harmless lie because we all are trying to achieve something by doing that. "But of course, a lie is bad, it is hurtful and it creates distrust between people. But so can truth, truth at times could be more dangerous than lie and more destructive than one can imagine. Quite interestingly our story is actually blurring those lines and exploring beyond the regular interpretation of those two words, truth and lie." In the show, Huma has worked with debutant actress Avantika Dassani, the daughter of 'Maine Pyar Kiya' fame actress Bhagyashree. She shares how working with Avantika took her back to the memory lane of her debut film 'Gangs Of Wasseypur'.

## Pole dancing was on my wishlist: Maera Misshra



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'Bhagya Lakshmi' actress Maera Misshra has always been attracted to pole dancing and now she has finally been able to fulfill that wish. She had recently posted about her dancing skills on her social media handle.

Talking about her love for pole dancing, Maera mentioned: "I have always been very attracted to pole dancing. I really think it looks absolutely amazing. I was watching back-to-back videos of pole dancing on social media and then one day, I decided to reach out to my friend who is a great dancer, to teach me how to pole dance."

The MTV 'Splitsvilla 11' actress shares more about her attending the pole dancing classes and appreciates those who know this dancing style as it is quite challenging.

"I went for my first class in August 2021, and it was a wonderful experience. Learning pole dancing has always been on my list and I wanted to learn this before I plan on getting married. So now I have finally done it, I applaud every person who knows this art. It's a very difficult dance form and not as easy as it looks, and anyone who knows this can tell that it's one of the best ways to do the full-body workout," she adds.

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Actor Arjan Bajwa is playing the role of a popular novelist Tahir Wazir in the upcoming web series. His life undergoes a drastic change post his next book that becomes a page turner for him. Directed by Mukul Abhyankar, the psychological thriller features Mithun Chakraborty, Shruti Haasan, Arjan Bajwa, Gauhar Khan, Satyajit Dubey and Sonalee Kulkarni.

Arjan has tried to give his best for his role and he understood every minute details of his character explained to him by the director.

As he says: "I was in a completely relaxed state of mind when I went for the shoot. I didn't want to build something into myself and I like to mould myself with each scene. I wanted to follow my director and understand what he wants from my character."

He shares further that with each character a lot of preparation is required right from physical transformation to mentally involving themselves into the role



### IIFA POSTPONED TO MAY 20-21 FOLLOWING GLOBAL COVID SPREAD

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The International Indian Film Academy Awards 2022 also known as IIFA, which were earlier scheduled to be held in March 2022, have been postponed following the rapidly changing

public health situation and the spread of COVID-19 globally. The new dates for the event are now May 20-21. The organisers released a statement on Thursday saying, "The 22nd edition of the much-anticipated IIFA awards 2022 has been postponed to 20th and 21st of May 2022, with due regard to the changing circumstances in the spread of COVID-19 virus globally and keeping the health and safety of IIFA's fans and the general community at large." The statement further read, "The IIFA awards 2022 celebrations were originally scheduled in March 2022. We at IIFA are responsible and committed to ensure the

safety of the citizens and multitudes of IIFA fans who travel from across the globe to attend and experience the magic of IIFA. We sincerely regret the inconvenience caused, and hope that all concerned understand the sensitivity of the situation." In the recent past, several major film and TV events like Grammy Awards and the Oscars have been witnessing change in schedules and the major reason behind this is the emergence of the virus in other parts of the world.



Mouni Roy